



[Home](#) > [Cooking](#) > [Encyclopedia](#)

## COOKING

- [Cooking Guides](#)
- [Cooking Demos](#)
- [Culinary Q&A](#)
- [Encyclopedia](#)
- [Power Search](#)
- [Recipe Collections](#)
- [Recipes of the Day](#)
- [Recipe Video of the Day](#)

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[Today's TV Schedule](#)

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☐ Or was shown during

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Sponsor  
Recommendations

## Encyclopedia

### flour

**Definition:** *n.* The finely ground and sifted meal of various edible grains. Giant steel or stone rollers are used to grind the grain. Most supermarkets carry **steel-ground flour**, meaning it's crushed with huge, high-speed steel rollers or hammers. These high-velocity machines generate heat that strips away the wheat germ and destroys valuable vitamins and enzymes. The more naturally nutritious **stone-ground flour** is produced by grinding grain between two slowly moving stones. This crushes the grain without generating excess heat and separating the germ. Stone-ground flours are found in health-food stores and some large supermarkets. Flour ranges in texture from coarse to extremely soft and powdery, depending on the bolting (sifting) it receives at the mill. Wheat is the most common source of the flours used in cooking. It contains gluten, a protein that forms an elastic network that contains the gases that make mixtures (such as doughs and batters) rise as they bake. **All-purpose flour** is a blend of high-gluten hard wheat and low-gluten soft wheat. It's a fine-textured flour milled from the inner part of the wheat kernel and contains neither the **germ** (the sprouting part) nor the **bran** (the outer coating). U.S. law requires that all flours without wheat germ must have niacin, riboflavin, thiamin and iron added. (Individual millers sometimes also add vitamins A and D.) These flours are labeled "enriched." All-purpose flour comes in two forms—**bleached** and **unbleached**—that can be used interchangeably. Flour is bleached naturally, as it ages, or chemically. Most flour today is presifted, requiring only that it be stirred, then spooned into a measuring cup and leveled off. **Bread flour** is an unbleached, specially formulated, high-gluten blend of 99.8 percent hard-wheat flour, some malted barley flour (to improve yeast activity) and vitamin C or potassium bromate (to increase the gluten's elasticity and the dough's gas retention). It is ideal for yeast breads. The fuller-flavored **whole-wheat flour** contains wheat germ and has a higher fiber, nutritional and fat content. Store in the refrigerator to prevent rancidity. **Cake or pastry flour** is a fine-textured, soft-wheat flour with a high starch content. It makes particularly tender cakes and pastries. **Self-rising flour** is an all-purpose flour with baking powder and salt added. It can be substituted for all-purpose flour in yeast breads by omitting the salt and in quick breads by omitting both baking powder and salt. **Instant flour** is a granular flour formulated to dissolve quickly in hot or cold liquids. It's used mainly as a thickener in sauces, gravies and other cooked mixtures. **Gluten flour** is high-protein, hard-wheat flour treated to remove most of the starch (which leaves a high gluten content). It's used mainly as an additive to doughs made with low-gluten flour (such as rye flour), and to make low-calorie "gluten" breads. Store all flour in an airtight container. All-purpose and bread

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flour can be stored up to 6 months at room temperature (about 70 degrees F). High temperatures invite bugs and mold. Flours with part of the grain's germ (such as whole wheat) turn rancid quickly because of the oil in the germ. Refrigerate or freeze these flours tightly wrapped and use quickly. Other grains--such as barley, buckwheat, corn, oats, rice, rye and triticale--are also milled into flours. **flour** *v.* To lightly coat a food, utensil or baking container with flour. Flouring food to be fried facilitates browning, and coating foods that tend to stick together (such as chopped dried apricots) helps separate the pieces. Flouring a pie, pastry or cookie dough will prevent it from sticking to a work surface; flouring your hands, rolling pin or work surface prevents dough from sticking. Dusting greased baking pans with flour provides for easy removal of cakes, breads and other baked goods.

**Substitution:** FLOUR (for thickening) | 2 Tbsp all-purpose = 1 Tbsp cornstarch, potato starch or rice starch OR 4 tsp arrowroot OR 2 Tbsp quick-cooking tapioca

FLOUR | 1 cup sifted all-purpose = 1 cup minus 2 Tbsp unsifted all-purpose flour

FLOUR | 1 cup sifted cake = 1 cup minus 2 Tbsp sifted all-purpose flour

FLOUR | 1 cup sifted self-rising = 1 cup sifted all-purpose flour plus 1 1/2 tsp baking powder and 1/8 tsp salt

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